

Remarks

The final Office Action dated June 30, 2008 has been carefully considered. Claims 1-12 and 26-39, are canceled in view of the restriction requirement of March 2, 2006, without prejudice to the patentability of the claims thereof. Claim 13 has been amended. Claims 19 and 22 have been canceled. Consideration of the current claims is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections

In the Office Action, claims 13-25 and 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Beihoffer et al (WO 99/25393). It will be set forth herein that is directed to multicomponent SAPs which is different from the present invention as set forth in the claims and that Beihoffer et al. does not disclose or suggest the invention set forth in the current claims.

Beihoffer et al. is directed to multicomponent superabsorbent gel particles, whereas the present invention is directed to acidic type superabsorbent polymers. Beihoffer et al. multicomponent superabsorbent gel particles in the Abstract as comprising at least one acidic water-absorbing resin and at least one basic water-absorbing resin. Beihoffer et al. discloses acidic type superabsorbent polymers in the Background of the Invention as electrolyte-containing liquids such as commercially available SAPs that include sodium polyacrylate. Then Beihoffer et al. discloses that such sodium polyacrylate SAPs have a dramatic decrease in absorption due to “salt poisoning”. To overcome the salt poisoning, Beihoffer et al. specifically discloses that multicomponent superabsorbent polymers be used instead of acidic type SAPs. Since the present invention is specifically directed to acidic type SAPs, then it is

obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that Beihoffer et al. teaches away from using acidic type SAPs.

Beihoffer et al. fails to disclose a surface treated absorbent material including a superabsorbent polymer including an anionic polymer, internal crosslinking agent wherein the superabsorbent polymer has a degree of neutralization of greater than about 25%, wherein superabsorbent polymer particles are prepared and surface treated with a surface crosslinking agent and from about 0.5% to about 5% by weight of a cationic polymeric coating.

The Office Action dated June 30, 2008 has been carefully reviewed. The Response to Arguments in paragraphs 1-8 is well taken and appreciated. It has been emphasized herein that Beihoffer et al. is specifically directed to multicomponent SAPs as defined and in the “Background of the Invention” teaches away from acidic type SAPs, the subject matter of the present invention. As to the comments in Paragraphs 9-10, Beihoffer et al. discloses a specific type of SAP, a multicomponent SAP defined as comprising at least one acidic water-absorbing resin and at least one basic water-absorbing resin, and teaches away from acidic type SAPS of the present invention. The various disclosures of Beihoffer et al. cited in the Office Action are limited to multicomponent SAPs and are not directed to acidic type SAPs.

In summary, Beihoffer et al. is not directed to acidic type SAPs of the present invention, but to multicomponent SAPs, and specifically teaches away from acidic type SAPs of the present invention. In view of the present claims and foregoing comments, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 13-25 and 40 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Beihoffer et al (WO 99/25393) is respectfully requested.

Referring to the June 30, 2008 Office Action, Claims 13-25 and 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Nambu et al (US 5,883,158). Not only does Nambu et al. fail to attaining the gel stiffness of the present invention, as set forth below, Nambu et al. teaches away from attaining such gel stiffnesses due to the properties sought in Nambu et al.

Nambu et al. is directed to high absorption type superabsorbent polymers and cannot have the gel stiffness of the present invention whereas the present invention is directed to low absorbency superabsorbent polymers. The gel stiffness of the present invention is defined in the present application as the ratio of AUL(0.9psi)/CRC. This requires low CRC or absorbency, and high AUL(0.9psi), absorbency under a load of 0.9psi. Gel stiffness is set forth in the present invention to be at least 0.8 or more. Typical values of AUL(0.9psi) in the present application range from 11 to 21.8 including values for commercial superabsorbent polymers. CRC is the acronym for Centrifuge Retention Capacity Test which measures the ability of the superabsorbent polymer to retain liquid after being saturated. Typical values of the CRC for the present invention range from about 19.8g/g to about 24.3g/g. CRC values of prior art samples in Tables 1 and 2 of the present application range from about 23.6g/g to about 31.9g/g.

A Gel Stiffness of 0.8 means that $[AUL(0.9)/CRC] > 0.8$ or $AUL(0.9) > (0.8)CRC$ which shows the CRC values are less than about 24.3g/g which is shown in the present invention. The absorption capacities of the superabsorbent polymers in Nambu et al. are much higher, in the range of 48.8 to 60g/g, which implies an AUL(0.9) of at least about 39g/g to 48g/g which are values not attainable in superabsorbent polymers of the present application. For the foregoing reasons, Nambu et al. does not disclose the present invention and the

rejection of Claims 13-25, and 40 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by or in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Nambu et al. should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In light of the remarks presented herein, Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested. If, however, any issues remain unresolved, the Examiner is invited to telephone Applicants' counsel at the number provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

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